

Sunday, July 14, 2024 pm

Studies in 2 Peter (14)
MOCKING THE LORD'S RETURN
2 Peter 3:1-9

As we continue our study through 2 Peter, we have devoted several lessons to false teachers. We have noted their character, danger and fate among other things. But, in that text he does not specify what these particular false teachers were teaching. The benefit of that is that we know we can apply the principles to ANY false teaching. However, as we read through 2 Peter 3, it is possible that this is the primary erroneous doctrine being advanced – namely, scoffing at the Lord's 2nd coming (when, where, how, what, etc.). Regardless, that is the subject Peter now addresses and in this lesson we too want to focus on that subject.

I. Peter's warning - Mocking the Lord's Delay (1-4)

- a. Peter again reminds them that this is his 2nd letter to them. We noted similar language in 2 Peter 1:12-15. We are again reminded of the importance of reminders. Also bear in mind that Peter has just addressed an unpleasant subject – false teachers. His tone now changes to encouragement and confidence. As if to say, “You do not have to be deceived by these false teachers” (cf. Ephesians 4:11-16, esp. vs. 14).
- b. His goal is to stir up their pure (sincere – NASB) minds. Reminders sometimes motivate us to move to where we ought to be. In the case of Peter just having finished addressing false teachers and the danger they pose, Peter wants to ensure that His audience maintains their purity, not only in action but also in motive. Matthew 5:8 reminds us that it is the pure heart that will see God.
- c. Remember the truth you have already been taught:
 - i. By the holy prophets – recall 2 Peter 1:19-21. In that lesson we addressed the teachings and prophecies of some of the Old Testament prophets. We also addressed the power of prophecy in establishing WHY we should believe in Jesus and the God of the Bible.
 - ii. By the apostles of the Lord and Savior. Of note, the NASB describes the apostles as, “your apostles” which simply identifies them as the ones they had learned the truth from. This was not about distinguishing one apostle from another, or the apostles of Christ from other so-called apostles (or maybe it is – especially if they are false teachers).
 - iii. Be reminded of the process through which the truth was shared. Jesus promised the helper, who would guide them into all truth. What they taught and later wrote was thus the work of the Holy Spirit – John 14:26, 16:13, etc.
 - iv. Cf. Acts 20:20-21, 27 – Paul, speaking to the Ephesian elders noted that he had not failed to declare to them “the whole counsel of God”. Peter had done the same thing. This WAS the commission given to the apostles – cf. Matthew 16:18-19, 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, etc. The rest of the NT records their fulfilling this commission.
- d. Warning: Scoffers will come in the last day.
 - i. What is a scoffer? One who mocks or jeers, treats something with contempt. The noun is found twice. But the verb form is found 13x in the NT, most of which are related to Jesus as He was being prepared to be crucified, or on the cross. Think of the chief priests, scribes and elders at the foot of the cross – Matthew 27:41-42; recall in our Nehemiah

class – Nehemiah 4:1-3, as the people began to rebuild the walls, Sanballat and Tobiah mocked the Jews.

- ii. These, “walk according to their own lusts” – I appeal to the character of the false teachers of chapter 2. The other time the word scoffing is found is in Jude 18, *how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts*. These are self-centered people who do NOT want to comply with God’s truth.
- iii. Our text reveals they mock “the promise of His coming.” We know that our Lord promised He would return again – John 14:2-3. See also Acts 1:11 where after He ascended the angels declared He would come again. We could devote an entire lesson to this subject, as it was a subject of discussion and anticipation while they were upon the earth. It seems they were expecting an immediate return. We find that that in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 where Paul declared He will come back. In 2 Thessalonians 2:1ff where Paul needed to address their anticipation of an imminent return. Paul told it was not happening very soon (and so will Peter).
- iv. This is true even today. We find many who live their lives as if they have all the time in the world. Perhaps they do, but we certainly do not know. Peter will bear that out later in this chapter (3:10ff). But how many today believe His return is imminent (in our lifetime of course, because we are that special generation)? And how many REJECT God and Jesus because He has not yet returned and thus they believe He will not? How many reject the warnings because life goes on and they see no end coming. How many MOCK Christians because they live AS IF He is going to return, whenever that may be? Cf. 1 Peter 4:3-4 the speak evil of you because you are not living as you used to.

II. **The consistency of God’s word (5-8)**

- a. Peter answers their mocking with details to consider.
- b. This they “willfully forget” – imply they are willfully ignorant of the teachings in God’s word. As believers, we assume that most have a certain level of understanding of scripture. But the majority do NOT! The majority knows nothing AND DOES NOT care to even consider it. (cf. Mathew 13:4,19 – the “wayside”).
- c. That by the word of God the heavens were of old - God SPOKE and the world came into existence
 - i. Genesis 1:1-3, 6, 9, etc. – “Then God said...”
 - ii. Hebrews 11:3 tells us, *By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible*.
 - iii. I want to impress upon us that this universe is here because of the power of God’s **word**. Psalm 33:6, *By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth*.
 - iv. Something the naturalist CANNOT explain is where this universe began. Because of the irrefutable (and might I say – OBJECTIVE) laws of science, they are forced to acknowledge a beginning. BUT they cannot explain it! **I can, by faith!** I accept the evidence that something (Someone) OUTSIDE of natural processes brought this universe into existence. AND that “Someone” is God! Romans 1:20.
 - v. Vs. 5 continues, *and the earth standing out of water and in the water*. Moses declared that in Genesis 1:7-10 recalls some of His work on 2nd and 3rd days of creation week.
- d. That God destroyed the world by flood - Vs. 6. This is a clear reference to the flood.

- i. Peter's point is that God destroyed the world once. Genesis 6-9 records the flood and salvation of Noah and his family. Peter referred to the event in 1 Peter 3:20-21. Earlier in 2 Peter 2:5 – he also referred to it.
 - ii. Again, there is plenty of evidence that at some time in the past, there was a great flood. Scientific fossil records verify this.
 - iii. Peter's point is that we have reason to believe that God has kept His word in times past.
- e. Vs. 7, "*But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word...*"
 - i. Why does this world continue to stand? Because God has willed it so. We only continue to exist because God's word is accomplishing His will. Isaiah 55:11 notes, *So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.*
- f. God does not reckon time the same way that we do.
 - i. Peter notes that with God, a thousand years is as a day, and a day as a thousand years. Peter chose a broad time frame but there likely nothing significant about 1000 years, though many end time speculators try to make it mean something. Peter could have said, 10,000 years or a million years and the point would be the same. God does NOT work on our timescale.
 - ii. Likely he is referencing Psalm 90:4, *For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it is past, And like a watch in the night.*
 - iii. Friends, this is why we can NEVER put a definite time on His plans.
 - iv. BUT, in answer to the challenger of scoffers, notice vs. 9

III. **Why is the Lord delaying? (9)**

- a. Peter emphasizes that *the Lord is not slack (slow) concerning His promise*. We must always remind ourselves, as we study prayer and other matters, that God works in His time, which is always best (cf. Romans 8:28 – all things work together for good – according to His purpose.). Recall Luke 18:7-8 after the parable of the unjust judge avenging the defrauded widow".
- b. Further he reminds us that God does work on OUR timeframe – "*as some count slackness*".
- c. *He is longsuffering toward us* – God bears long with us (again Luke 18:7).
 - i. Psalm 86:15 finds David declaring, *But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, Longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth.*
 - ii. Isaiah 30:18, after Isaiah warns that the LORD will punish Israel for their arrogance we find this promise, *Therefore the Lord will wait, that He may be gracious to you; And therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the Lord is a God of justice; Blessed are all those who wait for Him.*
 - iii. I am grateful for what God puts up with in me and others.
- d. *Not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*
 - i. This is REAL reason God is delaying His return. 1 Timothy 2:3-4 notes that God desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth.
 - ii. Hell is described as a place of eternal torments. And it is as real as heaven (cf. Matthew 25:46). And while God will send many, in fact most, there, it is not what He desires.
 - iii. What does God desire? That all men come to repentance. Cf. Acts 17:30-31.
 - iv. Understand, as long as we are still here, there is still time for one to repent.
 - v. If we are living righteously, we may desire that God return right now. But understand that His delay is not so much about you as it is for your loved one, or others, who has yet to respond to His invitation.

Truly, the Lord is going to return. We just do not know when, and Peter will address this in greater detail, and so will we, in our next lesson. Because we do not know when, we should always be ready. We should always be on guard, lest the worldly draw us away from Him. What about you? Are you living your life so that if and when He does return, you will be ready? If not, how can we help you? Think about it!